

Public Law 103-176  
103d Congress

An Act

Dec. 3, 1993

[H.R. 1268]

Indian Tribal  
Justice Act.  
25 USC 3601  
note.

25 USC 3601.

To assist the development of tribal judicial systems, and for other purposes.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the "Indian Tribal Justice Act".

**SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

The Congress finds and declares that—

(1) there is a government-to-government relationship between the United States and each Indian tribe;

(2) the United States has a trust responsibility to each tribal government that includes the protection of the sovereignty of each tribal government;

(3) Congress, through statutes, treaties, and the exercise of administrative authorities, has recognized the self-determination, self-reliance, and inherent sovereignty of Indian tribes;

(4) Indian tribes possess the inherent authority to establish their own form of government, including tribal justice systems;

(5) tribal justice systems are an essential part of tribal governments and serve as important forums for ensuring public health and safety and the political integrity of tribal governments;

(6) Congress and the Federal courts have repeatedly recognized tribal justice systems as the appropriate forums for the adjudication of disputes affecting personal and property rights;

(7) traditional tribal justice practices are essential to the maintenance of the culture and identity of Indian tribes and to the goals of this Act;

(8) tribal justice systems are inadequately funded, and the lack of adequate funding impairs their operation; and

(9) tribal government involvement in and commitment to improving tribal justice systems is essential to the accomplishment of the goals of this Act.

25 USC 3602.

**SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

For purposes of this Act:

(1) The term "Bureau" means the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior.

(2) The term "Courts of Indian Offenses" means the courts established pursuant to part 11 of title 25, Code of Federal Regulations.

(3) The term "Indian tribe" means any Indian tribe, band, nation, pueblo, or other organized group or community, includ-

ing any Alaska Native entity, which administers justice under its inherent authority or the authority of the United States and which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indian tribes because of their status as Indians.

(4) The term "judicial personnel" means any judge, magistrate, court counselor, court clerk, court administrator, bailiff, probation officer, officer of the court, dispute resolution facilitator, or other official, employee, or volunteer within the tribal justice system.

(5) The term "Office" means the Office of Tribal Justice Support within the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

(6) The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior.

(7) The term "tribal organization" means any organization defined in section 4(l) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act.

(8) The term "tribal justice system" means the entire judicial branch, and employees thereof, of an Indian tribe, including (but not limited to) traditional methods and forums for dispute resolution, lower courts, appellate courts (including intertribal appellate courts), alternative dispute resolution systems, and circuit rider systems, established by inherent tribal authority whether or not they constitute a court of record.

## TITLE I—TRIBAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS

### SEC. 101. OFFICE OF TRIBAL JUSTICE SUPPORT.

25 USC 3611.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—There is hereby established within the Bureau the Office of Tribal Justice Support. The purpose of the Office shall be to further the development, operation, and enhancement of tribal justice systems and Courts of Indian Offenses.

(b) **TRANSFER OF EXISTING FUNCTIONS AND PERSONNEL.**—All functions performed before the date of the enactment of this Act by the Branch of Judicial Services of the Bureau and all personnel assigned to such Branch as of the date of the enactment of this Act are hereby transferred to the Office of Tribal Justice Support. Any reference in any law, regulation, executive order, reorganization plan, or delegation of authority to the Branch of Judicial Services is deemed to be a reference to the Office of Tribal Justice Support.

(c) **FUNCTIONS.**—In addition to the functions transferred to the Office pursuant to subsection (b), the Office shall perform the following functions:

(1) Provide funds to Indian tribes and tribal organizations for the development, enhancement, and continuing operation of tribal justice systems.

(2) Provide technical assistance and training, including programs of continuing education and training for personnel of Courts of Indian Offenses.

(3) Study and conduct research concerning the operation of tribal justice systems.

(4) Promote cooperation and coordination among tribal justice systems and the Federal and State judiciary systems.

(5) Oversee the continuing operations of the Courts of Indian Offenses.

(6) Provide funds to Indian tribes and tribal organizations for the continuation and enhancement of traditional tribal judicial practices.

(d) **NO IMPOSITION OF STANDARDS.**—Nothing in this Act shall be deemed or construed to authorize the Office to impose justice standards on Indian tribes.

(e) **ASSISTANCE TO TRIBES.**—(1) The Office shall provide technical assistance and training to any Indian tribe or tribal organization upon request. Technical assistance and training shall include (but not be limited to) assistance for the development of—

(A) tribal codes and rules of procedure;

(B) tribal court administrative procedures and court records management systems;

(C) methods of reducing case delays;

(D) methods of alternative dispute resolution;

(E) tribal standards for judicial administration and conduct; and

(F) long-range plans for the enhancement of tribal justice systems.

(2) Technical assistance and training provided pursuant to paragraph (1) may be provided through direct services, by contract with independent entities, or through grants to Indian tribes or tribal organizations.

(f) **INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE ON TRIBAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS.**—The Office shall maintain an information clearinghouse (which shall include an electronic data base) on tribal justice systems and Courts of Indian Offenses, including (but not limited to) information on staffing, funding, model tribal codes, tribal justice activities, and tribal judicial decisions. The Office shall take such actions as may be necessary to ensure the confidentiality of records and other matters involving privacy rights.

Confidential  
information.

25 USC 3612.

Contracts.

#### **SEC. 102. SURVEY OF TRIBAL JUDICIAL SYSTEMS.**

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than six months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary, in consultation with Indian tribes, shall enter into a contract with a non-Federal entity to conduct a survey of conditions of tribal justice systems and Courts of Indian Offenses to determine the resources and funding, including base support funding, needed to provide for expeditious and effective administration of justice. The Secretary, in like manner, shall annually update the information and findings contained in the survey required under this section.

(b) **LOCAL CONDITIONS.**—In the course of any annual survey, the non-Federal entity shall document local conditions of each Indian tribe, including, but not limited to—

(1) the geographic area and population to be served;

(2) the levels of functioning and capacity of the tribal justice system;

(3) the volume and complexity of the caseloads;

(4) the facilities, including detention facilities, and program resources available;

(5) funding levels and personnel staffing requirements for the tribal justice system; and

(6) the training and technical assistance needs of the tribal justice system.

(c) **CONSULTATION WITH INDIAN TRIBES.**—The non-Federal entity shall actively consult with Indian tribes and tribal organiza-

tions in the development and conduct of the surveys, including updates thereof, under this section. Indian tribes and tribal organizations shall have the opportunity to review and make recommendations regarding the findings of the survey, including updates thereof, prior to final publication of the survey or any update thereof. After Indian tribes and tribal organizations have reviewed and commented on the results of the survey, or any update thereof, the non-Federal entity shall report its findings, together with the comments and recommendations of the Indian tribes and tribal organizations, to the Secretary, the Committee on Indian Affairs of the Senate, and the Subcommittee on Native American Affairs of the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives.

Reports.

**SEC. 103. BASE SUPPORT FUNDING FOR TRIBAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS.**

25 USC 3613.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Pursuant to the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, the Secretary is authorized (to the extent provided in advance in appropriations Acts) to enter into contracts, grants, or agreements with Indian tribes for the performance of any function of the Office and for the development, enhancement, and continuing operation of tribal justice systems and traditional tribal judicial practices by Indian tribal governments.

(b) **PURPOSES FOR WHICH FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE MAY BE USED.**—Financial assistance provided through contracts, grants, or agreements entered into pursuant to this section may be used for—

(1) planning for the development, enhancement, and operation of tribal justice systems;

(2) the employment of judicial personnel;

(3) training programs and continuing education for tribal judicial personnel;

(4) the acquisition, development, and maintenance of a law library and computer assisted legal research capacities;

(5) the development, revision, and publication of tribal codes, rules of practice, rules of procedure, and standards of judicial performance and conduct;

(6) the development and operation of records management systems;

(7) the construction or renovation of facilities for tribal justice systems;

(8) membership and related expenses for participation in national and regional organizations of tribal justice systems and other professional organizations; and

(9) the development and operation of other innovative and culturally relevant programs and projects, including (but not limited to) programs and projects for—

(A) alternative dispute resolution;

(B) tribal victims assistance or victims services;

(C) tribal probation services or diversion programs;

(D) juvenile services and multidisciplinary investigations of child abuse; and

(E) traditional tribal judicial practices, traditional tribal justice systems, and traditional methods of dispute resolution.

(c) **FORMULA.**—(1) Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary, with the full participation of Indian tribes, shall establish and promulgate by regulation, a

Regulations.

formula which establishes base support funding for tribal justice systems in carrying out this section.

(2) The Secretary shall assess caseload and staffing needs for tribal justice systems that take into account unique geographic and demographic conditions. In the assessment of these needs, the Secretary shall work cooperatively with Indian tribes and tribal organizations and shall refer to any data developed as a result of the surveys conducted pursuant to section 102 and to relevant assessment standards developed by the Judicial Conference of the United States, the National Center for State Courts, the American Bar Association, and appropriate State bar associations.

(3) Factors to be considered in the development of the base support funding formula shall include, but are not limited to—

(A) the caseload and staffing needs identified under paragraph (2);

(B) the geographic area and population to be served;

(C) the volume and complexity of the caseloads;

(D) the projected number of cases per month;

(E) the projected number of persons receiving probation services or participating in diversion programs; and

(F) any special circumstances warranting additional financial assistance.

(4) In developing and administering the formula for base support funding for the tribal judicial systems under this section, the Secretary shall ensure equitable distribution of funds.

25 USC 3614.

#### **SEC. 104. TRIBAL JUDICIAL CONFERENCES.**

The Secretary is authorized to provide funds to tribal judicial conferences, under section 101 of this Act, pursuant to contracts entered into under the authority of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act for the development, enhancement, and continuing operation of tribal justice systems of Indian tribes which are members of such conference. Funds provided under this section may be used for—

(1) the employment of judges, magistrates, court counselors, court clerks, court administrators, bailiffs, probation officers, officers of the court, or dispute resolution facilitators;

(2) the development, revision, and publication of tribal codes, rules of practice, rules of procedure, and standards of judicial performance and conduct;

(3) the acquisition, development, and maintenance of a law library and computer assisted legal research capacities;

(4) training programs and continuing education for tribal judicial personnel;

(5) the development and operation of records management systems;

(6) planning for the development, enhancement, and operation of tribal justice systems; and

(7) the development and operation of other innovative and culturally relevant programs and projects, including (but not limited to) programs and projects for—

(A) alternative dispute resolution;

(B) tribal victims assistance or victims services;

(C) tribal probation services or diversion programs;

(D) juvenile services and multidisciplinary investigations of child abuse; and



(E) traditional tribal judicial practices, traditional justice systems, and traditional methods of dispute resolution.

## TITLE II—AUTHORIZATIONS OF APPROPRIATIONS

### SEC. 201. TRIBAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS.

25 USC 3621.

(a) OFFICE.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out the provisions of sections 101 and 102 of this Act, \$7,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000. None of the funds provided under this subsection may be used for the administrative expenses of the Office.

(b) BASE SUPPORT FUNDING FOR TRIBAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out the provisions of section 103 of this Act, \$50,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000.

(c) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES FOR OFFICE.—There is authorized to be appropriated, for the administrative expenses of the Office, \$500,000 for each of the fiscal years 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000.

(d) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES FOR TRIBAL JUDICIAL CONFERENCES.—There is authorized to be appropriated, for the administrative expenses of tribal judicial conferences, \$500,000 for each of the fiscal years 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000.

(e) SURVEY.—For carrying out the survey under section 102, there is authorized to be appropriated, in addition to the amount authorized under subsection (a) of this section, \$400,000.

(f) INDIAN PRIORITY SYSTEM.—Funds appropriated pursuant to the authorizations provided by this section and available for a tribal justice system shall not be subject to the Indian priority system. Nothing in this Act shall preclude a tribal government from supplementing any funds received under this Act with funds received from any other source including the Bureau or any other Federal agency.

(g) ALLOCATION OF FUNDS.—In allocating funds appropriated pursuant to the authorization contained in subsection (a) among the Bureau, Office, tribal governments and Courts of Indian Offenses, the Secretary shall take such actions as may be necessary to ensure that such allocation is carried out in a manner that is fair and equitable to all tribal governments and is proportionate to base support funding under section 103 received by the Bureau, Office, tribal governments, and Courts of Indian Offenses.

(h) NO OFFSET.—No Federal agency shall offset funds made available pursuant to this Act for tribal justice systems against other funds otherwise available for use in connection with tribal justice systems.

## TITLE III—DISCLAIMERS

### SEC. 301. TRIBAL AUTHORITY.

25 USC 3631.

Nothing in this Act shall be construed to—

(1) encroach upon or diminish in any way the inherent sovereign authority of each tribal government to determine the role of the tribal justice system within the tribal government or to enact and enforce tribal laws;

- (2) diminish in any way the authority of tribal governments to appoint personnel;
- (3) impair the rights of each tribal government to determine the nature of its own legal system or the appointment of authority within the tribal government;
- (4) alter in any way any tribal traditional dispute resolution forum;
- (5) imply that any tribal justice system is an instrumentality of the United States; or
- (6) diminish the trust responsibility of the United States to Indian tribal governments and tribal justice systems of such governments.

Approved December 3, 1993.

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**LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.R. 1268 (S. 521):**

**HOUSE REPORTS:** Nos. 103-205 (Comm. on Natural Resources) and 103-383 (Comm. of Conference).

**SENATE REPORTS:** No. 103-88 accompanying S. 521 (Comm. on Indian Affairs).

**CONGRESSIONAL RECORD**, Vol. 139 (1993):

July 21, S. 521 considered and passed Senate.

Aug. 2, H.R. 1268 considered and passed House.

Aug. 6, considered and passed Senate, amended.

Nov. 19, House and Senate agreed to conference report.